

Mariann Czifra

The Bequest of Ferenc Kazinczy  
A Fragment

The events celebrating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ferenc Kazinczy's birth in 2009 could be interpreted as a turning point in understanding his work. A variety of cultural events, conferences, exhibitions, and also monographs and new collections of essays on Kazinczy made it evident for the professional as well as the wider public that speaking about him as a key figure of the renewal of Hungarian language at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is but one way to address the author's oeuvre. Kazinczy was presented instead as a multifaceted person: an aesthete, a translator, a diary-writer, a freemason, a traveler and writer of travelogues, a politician, a cultural manager at the very same time, and also a belletrist fond of clothing and fashion, or an enthusiast for landscape gardening. However, despite these recent shifts in the discourse on Kazinczy, for most of the people he remains the “father” of modern Hungarian language and style – the one whom the Eloquent Hungarian Speech Contest was named after.

My dissertation would like to contribute to this new discourse on Kazinczy not by reevaluating his role as a reformer of Hungarian language and style, but to redefine a context, based on my archival research, around the corpus of key texts that are widely known as, paraphrasing Kazinczy, 'the strife for language reform'. Indeed, if one does not focus exclusively to published materials, but maps the wider discourse that these texts formed a part of, one might come to the conclusion that some of the firm assumptions that has been shared by most experts are rather questionable.

It is commonly argued that the period of language reform started with the publication of Kazinczy's collected epigrams, *Tövisek és Virágok* (1811), and was over at the end of the 1810s or at the beginning of 1820s, and more precisely with the publication of the essay, *Orthologus és Neologus; nálunk és más nemzeteknél*. The appearance of *Tövisek és Virágok* is seen as an act of provocation by which Kazinczy intended to start the language reform. However, as I argue in Chapter 1, the contingencies of writing, editing, and publishing of the mentioned volume suggest that Kazinczy did not interpret these acts as an important part of a hidden agenda, or something of a start, but that role was later attributed to the text. As regard *Orthologus and Neologus*, a nuanced analysis of its rhetorics shows that it could hardly be a closure of the reform. Furthermore, archival materials reveal that, accidentally, the version of *Orthologus és Neologus* that was canonized is not that Kazinczy had intended to publish.

The version of *Orthologus és Neologus* that he indeed wished to present for the wide public can be found among his bequested materials. Chapter 2 focuses on this very manuscript and its variants, and it is also an exploration in categorizing the wide variety of texts of the bequest. I concluded that, firstly, the rate of those manuscripts that was arranged and edited by Kazinczy himself is rather high; and secondly, that he was not interested in setting his treatises in order. In those cases, when Kazinczy edited his texts for publication or just for distribution among his friends, he treated the manuscripts with extreme care. Most of his treatments, however, and *Orthologus és Neologus* in particular, do not belong to this group of materials, and the manuscript's immediate archival context neither does so. Further, the monitoring of the bequest revealed that, in the 1810s, Kazinczy, aside such well-known published comments like *Mondolat*, was the target of several anonymous manuscripts that were circulated among the literate.

Before taking these observations to their conclusions, I explore Kazinczy's views on anonymity in Chapter 3. I present the catechism of the theologian István Márton as a case study. Kazinczy published a collective volume defending Márton's catechism, by which he not just supported Márton against the opponents of the latter, but also publicly objected to anonymity, that might

discomfort the debate partner. Anonymity was a highly disturbing and challenging issue for Kazinczy. It is maintained that his *Orthologus és Neologus* was written in response to the essay by a certain Vida Füredi, entitled *A' Recenziókról*. Füredi has been traditionally identified with Sándor Kisfaludy. However, the archival materials clearly demonstrate that Kazinczy did not identify Füredi and Kisfaludy at all. Indeed, their identification is far from being self-evident: in the 1810s, texts of collective authorship were common, and the data acquired up-to-date does not qualify us to make this identification.

The fate of Füredi's text is telling when it comes to the reception of the language reform in general, and Kazinczy's role in the process, in particular. While a close look at the German context of Füredi's essay in Chapter 4 shows that the text was informed by the latest foreign discourses, the extent of its negligence by the late readers is striking: the reception, basically, has taken Kazinczy's reasoning on face value without even considering Füredi's arguments. The reason for this one-sided approach lies in the fact that Kazinczy's overwhelming figure dominated the whole reception. Kazinczy connected Füredi's essay to a supposed adverse party led by Ferenc Verseghy, which in Kazinczy's interpretation aimed at establishing a society of language control (censorship). Since late readers were, as a rule, convinced that Kazinczy was right versus the malignant Verseghy, no further consideration of Füredi's arguments were needed. Archival materials reveal, however, that even the role of a leader Kazinczy assigned to Verseghy is a bold construction: he aspired to such a role under no circumstances.

My reading of *Orthologus és Neologus* is based on a manuscript variant that Kazinczy claimed to be more faithful to his thoughts than the published version. I affirm three statements during my analysis: (1) the text addressed Verseghy and his "circle" invented by Kazinczy in his correspondence; (2) *orthologus* equals *grammaticus*; (3) Kazinczy intended to continue the text, and was convinced that he could not settle all issues regarding language, and the debate would go further on. Nor Kazinczy's essay, neither its context approves the hypothesis that the period of language reform was, as it is commonly known, over at the end of the 1810s or at the beginning of 1820s.

The last chapter explores the origins of the narrative schema by which the history of language reform has been told. I present my arguments as a commentary to a volume of manuscripts edited, commented and introduced by Kazinczy (*A' Glottomachusok*) that can be found in the bequest. The fate of the volume could be tracked in the reception as well. I claim that one should approach Kazinczy's oeuvre with constant reference to the manuscripts and their immediate contexts and treatment in the folios, in a large part because the image of Kazinczy that is widely known today and has its roots in 19<sup>th</sup> century, was based on unpublished texts. It can be demonstrated that the arrangement of the manuscripts, and their paratextual features highly influenced 19<sup>th</sup> century philologists in creating their image of Kazinczy widely distributed later, and still defining the discourse on the author. Therefore, my methodological suggestion is to devote distinguished attention to archival materials—and not only their content but their visual appearance, as well—in identifying and critically approaching existing literary historical narratives. I would suggest to call this type of approach "folial reading".

In the Appendix I included the unpublished texts by Kazinczy discussed in the dissertation: the variants of *Orthologus and Neologus*; the comparison of the published version of the same essay with its extended variant; and the collection of letters entitled *A' Glottomachusok*.